

Utility Patent Application

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

5 Patent Application based on: Docket No. 03-506
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SHOE AND BOOT CLEANING DEVICE

15 RELATED APPLICATIONS AND DISCLOSURES

The present application is a Continuation in Part of Serial No. 09/878,881, filed on 06/11/01, which is a Continuation in Part of Serial No. 09/370,922, filed on 08/09/99.

20 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to shoe cleaning devices, and, more particularly, to a shoe and boot cleaning device.

25 2. Description of the Related Art

As anyone who works outside for a living knows, dirty shoes and/or boots are a fact of life. Farming, working on a construction site, or just general walking is guaranteed to allow for the accumulation of dirt and mud. Additionally snow, ice, waste products and the like can accumulate on the sole of the boot or shoe.

5 One method of dealing with this is to remove the footwear whenever entering the home or business. While this method undoubtedly works the best, it certainly is not the most practical due to the large amount of time it takes. Another method consists of scraping one's foot along the grass or other horizontal surfaces to remove the debris.

10 However, this method is of little use when there are large accumulations of mud or dirt on the shoe. Finally, the use of a stick or other object to clean the shoe is possible. This method usually involves the uncomfortable situation of one trying to balance on one foot while cleaning the other. Whatever the method chosen, the debris that is removed from the footwear has to be cleaned up itself to prevent it 15 from being tracked into the building. Accordingly, the need has developed for a means by which one can clean their shoes or boots while still being worn, and that allows for the collection of the removed debris such as dirt, mud or snow.

In the related art, several devices are disclosed that describe a boot scraper able to be mounted to skiing implements. These include U.S. Patent no. 5,713,097, 20 issued in the name of Brown, U.S. Patent no. 5,142,098, issued in the name of

McCrink, U.S. Patent no. 4,927,176, issued in the name of King et al., U.S. Patent no. 4,145,063, issued in the name of Knapp et al. and U.S. Patent no. 3,976,304, issued in the name of Lillibridge et al.

Several patents describe a tool for cleaning cleated shoes. These include
5 U.S. Patent no. 5,694,660, issued in the name of Rachwalski, U.S. Patent no. 3,111,698, issued in the name of Heichle and U.S. Patent no. 2,817,863, issued in the name of Johns.

U.S. Patent no. 4,425,677, issued in the name of Cox, discloses a shoe
cleaning apparatus comprised of a scraper and liquid deodorant.

10 U.S. Patent no. D 340,585, issued in the name of Kirk, describes an
ornamental design for a ski boot brush.

A search of the prior art did not disclose any patents that anticipate directly
many features of the instant invention. Consequently, a need has been felt for
providing an apparatus and method which overcomes the problems cited above.

15 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an improved shoe
and boot cleaning device that facilitates cleaning of shoes or boots while still being
worn, and that allows for the collection of the removed debris such as dirt, mud or
snow.

20 Briefly described according to one embodiment of the present invention, a

shoe and boot cleaning device is disclosed, designed as an apparatus intended to aid in the removal of mud, dirt, or snow from one's shoes when entering indoors while the shoes are still being worn.

To use the present invention, one first wipes his or her feet on a scraper bar located on the left-hand side of the unit. This action is intended to remove any heavy buildup of dirt, mud or snow. Next, the user would scrub his or her foot across a series of inverted brushes on the right-hand side of the unit. This action will remove the remainder of any dirt. An open drawer is located on the bottom of the invention for the purposes of collecting any debris that falls from the shoes while they are being cleaned. The drawer is removable to allow it to be emptied. The use of present invention allows one to keep their shoes clean and avoids tracking dirt into homes, businesses or other buildings.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a device that cleans footwear without removing the footwear.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a device that can be used indoors without creating a mess.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a device that is easy to clean after use, allowing the accumulated dirt to be disposed of quickly and easily.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a device that is capable of removing large amounts of dirt and mud from shoes.

Other objects of the present invention include providing a device that is strong, lightweight and portable.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The advantages and features of the present invention will become better understood with reference to the following more detailed description and claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like elements are identified with like symbols, and in which:

10 FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the preferred embodiment of a shoe and boot cleaning device 10;

FIG. 2 is a side view thereof;

FIG. 3 is a top view thereof;

FIG. 4 is a cross sectional view, cut along line IV-IV of FIG. 1;

15 FIG. 5 is a bottom view of the preferred embodiment;

FIG. 6 is a front view of an alternate embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a side view of this alternate embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of the alternate embodiment cut along line VIII of FIG. 7;

20 FIG. 9 is a perspective view of another alternate embodiment of the present invention; and

FIGS. 10a through 10c are a series of in-use views of the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

5 The best mode for carrying out the invention is presented in terms of its preferred embodiment, herein depicted within the Figures 1 through 9, and 10a through 10c.

1. Detailed Description of the Figures

10 Referring now to FIG. 1, a shoe and boot cleaning device 10 is shown, according to the present invention, designed as an apparatus intended to aid in the removal of mud, dirt, or snow from one's shoes when entering indoors while the shoes are still being worn.

15 Referring now to FIGS. 1 through 3, the present invention comprises a main housing 30, of a generally rectangular, box-like configuration. The housing is generally hollow. At least one scraper blade 40 extends vertically upward from the top of the housing. The scraper blade 40 is of a generally rectangular configuration.

20 The scraper blade 40 is designed to remove any heavy buildup of dirt, mud or snow when a shoe or boot bottom is rubbed against the top of the scraper blade. It is envisioned that the scraper blade 40 is constructed of a material selected from

the group comprising metal and plastic.

It is envisioned that the scraper blade 40 can be positioned in various vectors along the top surface of the main housing 30. For purposes of disclosure, only one scraper blade is depicted, located at one side of the main housing 30, positioned vertically.

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Referring now to FIG. 4, at least one brush 50, of a linearly elongated, cylindrical configuration is attached to the housing, so that the brush 50 rests horizontally along its elongated axis. The uppermost surface of the brush 50 is elevated above the main housing's interior surface so that a shoe or boot can rest upon the top of the brush 50. The brush 50 rotates along its elongated radial axis about a cylindrical channel 52 formed in the cylindrical brush 50. The channel 52 receives an axle, described below, that allows for application or reduction of rotational drag, respectively, to the brush 50. The brush 50 contains hard bristles 55 along its exterior circumferential surface area. For purposes of disclosure, only one brush 50 is depicted, located next to the scraper blade 40.

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It is envisioned that the brush 50 or brushes 50 can be positioned at a variety of angles relative to the horizontal axis of the main housing.

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A divider post 57 is used to provide lateral support to the brush 50 and the scraper blade 40. However, other attachment points for the brush 50 and scraper blade 40 are envisioned.

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A brush cleaning means 60 is located beneath the brush 50 and is designed to come into mechanical interference with any mud located on the brush 50. The top edge of the brush cleaning means 60 is positioned slightly below the lowermost portion of the brush 50, and is of elongated length comparable to the length of the radial centerline of the brush 50, so as to remove debris from the entire brush 50 exterior surface as the brush 50 rotates. The brush cleaning means 60 is attached to the interior wall of the main housing 30 so as to not interfere with the falling debris reaching the bottom of the present invention.

The brush tension control means 70 is comprised of an axle which extends through a threaded aperture 53 formed in an upper portion of a lateral sidewall of the main housing 30 and is in physical communication with an end thereof to an end 51 of the brush 50 opposite the divider post 57. The axle penetrates the channel 52 formed in brush 50, so that brush 50 may freely and independently rotate about the axle subject to the forces applied to the brush 50. The axle may slightly penetrate the channel 52 or may completely penetrate the channel 52 and mounted to the divider post 57. An opposite end of the axle 58 is formed of a cylindrical knob portion 69 which has a diameter slightly larger than a diameter of the axle 58, so as to facilitate a firm grasp by a user thereof. Corresponding threads, formed along an opposite end of the axle 58, extend a linear distance away from the knob portion 69, and are designed so as to threadably engage the threaded aperture 53

provided in the lateral sidewall of the main housing 30. A tension spring 59, disposed around the axle 58 and having a friction plate 62 mounted at an end thereof adjacent to the end 51 of the brush 50, is biased in such a manner whereby the friction plate 60 is biased laterally against the end 51 of the brush 50, thereby increasing rotational drag thereof and thus requiring a greater external force by a user to rotate the brush 50. Rotation of the knob portion 69 by a user decreases the lateral force of the tension spring 59, thus removing mechanical contact of the friction plate 60 with the end 51 of the brush 50. The resultant functionality provides for a decrease in the rotational drag of the brush 50, thereby requiring less external force by a user to rotate the brush 50. Counter-rotation of the knob portion 69 biases the tension spring 59 laterally in a direction against the end 51 of the brush 50, in turn, biasing the friction plate 62 so as to mechanically contact the end 51 of the brush 50, thereby increasing the rotational drag of the brush 50. The knob portion 69 of the brush tension control means 70 is designed so as to be positioned outside the main housing 30, thereby facilitating easy access thereto by a user.

Referring now to FIGS. 1, 2 and 4, a drawer 90 is located at the bottom of the present invention. The drawer 90 slidably engages the interior of the housing, so as to cover the entire bottom surface of the housing. In this manner, the drawer 90 can catch the debris that falls from the scraper blade 40 and or brush 50. The drawer 90 is capable of separation from the housing to facilitate dumping of the

debris in a traditional waste paper basket or the like.

FIG. 5 shows the generally rectangular configuration of the present invention.

Referring now to FIGS. 6, 7 and 8, in an alternate embodiment of the present invention, a plurality of brushes 50 are elevated above the main housing 30 completely, via a pair of parallel brush support posts 100. The brushes 50 are parallel to one another. In addition, the scraper blade 40 is angled relative to the vertical plane.

Referring now to FIG. 9, in another embodiment of the present invention, the present invention contains a lid 110 coupled to the main housing 30 and a plurality of rotating brushes 50. Rotation of the brushes 50 is powered by an electric motor 64 mounted to a floor 33 of the main housing 30. The motor 64 is housed within a four-sided protective covering 67. A plurality of belts 65, positioned within a hollow interior of the main housing 30, couples rotational power of the motor 64 to the axles 58 of the brushes 50, so as to actuate rotation thereof. In this particular alternate embodiment, the brush cleaning means 60 is attached to an interior wall of the main housing 30, opposite a wall wherein a drawer 90 is located. Handles 120 are used to transport the main housing 30.

It is envisioned that other styles and configurations of the present invention can be easily incorporated into the teachings of the present invention, and only a few particular configuration shall be shown and described for purposes of clarity

and disclosure and not by way of limitation of scope.

2. Operation of the Preferred Embodiment

Referring now to FIGS. 10a through 10c, to use the preferred embodiment of
5 the present invention, one first wipes his or her feet on the scraper bar. This action
is intended to remove any heavy buildup of dirt, mud or snow. Next, the user would
scrub his or her foot across the inverted brushes 50. This action will remove the
remainder of any dirt. The drawer 90 collects any debris that falls from the shoes
while they are being cleaned. To empty the present invention, the drawer 90 is
10 removed, emptied and reinserted into the present invention.

The foregoing description is included to illustrate the operation of the
preferred embodiment and is not meant to limit the scope of the invention. The
scope of the invention is to be limited only by the following claims.